

WINTER 2016/2017



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WINTER 2016/2017

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Home Show designers & makers display their personal collections
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Old Growth aged trees get a second life as unique furniture
BY HESAN JAMES

Stepping Up carved trees carry a special niche
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ON THE COVER

Jane's Kitchen cabinet.
Photo by Oliver Parke



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THE BROOKS HOME



Home Show

Three Vermont curators display their personal collections

BY RACHEL ELIZABETH JONES



Whether you rent a shoebox apartment, homestead in a log cabin or own a mansion, your home is not just your castle; it's also your gallery. In a sense, everyone is a curator of his or her living quarters. So we wanted to know: What does home look like for professional curators?

For this issue of *Next*, three of Vermont's foremost curators graciously opened their doors to share their private collections and the stories behind them. Bill Brooks, director and curator of the Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History in Middlebury, Julie Cohen, director and former curator of the University of Vermont's Plummer Museum of Art, and Rory Rogers, head curator at Shelburne Museum.

Without institutional directives or a particular exhibition framework, what do these un-mandated individuals collect, and how do they display it? What artworks and artists are closest to them? Take a look.

Bill Brooks' Henry Sheldon Museum collection in Middlebury, Vt.

Folk Rebellion

The interior of Bill Brooks' New Haven farmhouse is a celebration of folk art in the broadest terms, from the massive banners of Sheldon Museum exhibitions to his garage right down to diminutive wooden *Alce* in *Woodstock* figures. His home explodes with color, finding unique harmony between "traditional" Americans and the often vibrant, unbridled works of contemporary self-taught artists.

Brooks, 74, began collecting in his thirties. He started somewhat modestly with an interest in shaverbills and derags, which was inspired to him by the mother of a girlfriend. After 25 years as a banker, first in Washington, D.C., and then in Salisbury, Md., Brooks retired early and launched his second career, in 1983, by enrolling in New York University's graduate program in American Folk Art Studies. There he took to collecting with a vengeance.

While studying in New York, Brooks was a frequent visitor to both the American Primitive and Cowi-Morris galleries, which specialize in works made outside of the narrow art-world canon. He recalls bringing home some uniquely large purchases by subway, including the cribwood assemblage "George Peck" by Montana artist Keith Goodhart and the metal "Green Man" sculpture by Clyde Angel.

Brooks has strong ties to Vermont's folk art community. Prior to his current posting, he served on the board of Grass Roots Art and Community Effort in Hardwick and was executive director of Frog Hollow Vermont State Craft Center from 1997 to 2002. Accordingly, a strong cache of GRACE artists is represented on his walls, in display or small

THE COHEN HOME



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

An Eye for History

If you entered **Janie Cohen's** Burlington house through the front door — which “nobody does in Vermont,” she insists — you’d see a painting by Axel Stollberg, the artist who founded Aoxly Gallery & Frame Shop in Waterbury. “One night the house just fell apart,” the painting reads. Despite this not-so-rosy start, Cohen’s aesthetic is moderately sparse, underscored by subtle whimsy and an appreciation for texture and simple geometries.

The house in which Cohen has lived for nearly 13 years was built in 1885 at the behest of Urban Woodbury, according to Cohen. Woodbury served as Burlington’s mayor from 1868 to 1907 and was the state’s 45th governor from 1894 to 1896. Echoes of the past abound in the architecture, from the “half” bedroom built as maid’s quarters to the deep wooden pantry (complete with serving window to the dining room) to the outline of the original, narrow woodstove on the kitchen floor. “It has a porch,” Cohen said. “What do you do with a parlor in 2010?”

What she did with it was turn it into her “death studio.” A wooden farm table serves as a workspace for the hand-sewn fabric collage that Cohen has been making for decades. On one wall hang

some of her artwork, recently returned from the “Dearest Depositions” show (with Anna Katz of Burlington City Arts) at the Amy R. Tarnett Gallery. It was Cohen’s first time exhibiting. In the adjacent dining room there’s a large untitled work, made with 19th-century Japanese fabric dotted with a swan family crest.

Cohen’s love for the past of history extends beyond her

own artwork. A barn door newly purchased from **ReSource** leans against the studio wall, its peeling white paint and vine-patterned wooden panels inspiring her interest in textile collage and mashings. On one tabletop, a selection of Dutch pipe bowls is clustered in a little family. She purchased these for “nothing” at an antique store in Amsterdam, where she lived from 1979 to 1980 while working at the Rijksmuseum. Two brass griffin-shaped candleholders on her dining room table came from a flea market in the city.

Last year Cohen, a Pinsoon scholar, mounted “Staring Back: The Creation and Legacy of Pinsoon’s Demonstration of Anger” at the Fleming. Her original exploration arose from her synthesis



A view for fabric and sewing is evident throughout, just as Cohen’s history art is.



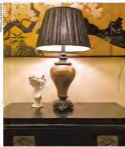
COHEN'S AESTHETIC IS MODERATELY SPARSE, UNDERSCORED BY SUBTLE WHIMSY.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

Rory Rogers and Jonathan Mikulak share a study of elegant taste in their apartment at Shuburne Farms.



THE ROGERS/MIKULAK HOME



Class and Curiosities

Rory Rogers lives in one of Vermont's most coveted locations. That is, it would be coveted if more people knew it existed. Three years ago, he moved into an apartment built onto Kinross Elementary with James Watson Webb's 60-room Brick House, located on the property of Shuburne Farms. It's hard not to gasp when passing through the tree-lined driveway or rounding the bend behind the house to see the broad vista of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks.

Rogers' partner, Jonathan Mikulak, a graphic design, moved into the apartment in June. The decor, Rogers joked, "is the culmination of our relationship... I like the details, [and] he does the broad strokes." Between the two of them, they certainly appear to know what they're doing with regard to interior design.

Rogers describes their collective style as "a house of classical and Asian-inspired" influences. Much of the Stickley Chippendale furniture throughout the house, he said, "Jonathan has had since he was 16." A calculated palette of beige, gray-blue and silver defines the living room, complemented by dark wood-bowl accent pieces, blue-and-white Chinese ceramics and an antique Japanese screen.

"I sneak things into this room," Rogers said with a chuckle, indicating a silver teacaddy hasn't atop the coffee table. It does not seem out of place.

Other pieces from Rogers' personal collection are kept in what he calls his "cabinet of curiosities," the display portion of a secretary desk and shelf. Included among these treasures is a 19th-century album of dried seaweed, bound between two polished shells. In the bathroom are spectacular 1940s-era, Art Deco metal medallions of human skin, a torso and an eyeball, the last of which is bigger than a grapefruit.

"You have to live with the idiosyncrasies of the house," Rogers said. These include the long, moon's open niches.

The pair opted to paint these black to set off a pair of hand-carved marble Greek architectural models, found at Huntington's large Canal Market.

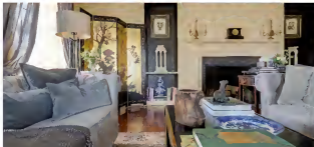
The dining room was part of the original

Brick House, built with wood sourced by the Webb's hand carpenters from other early New England houses. Small curved stairwells and wallpapered corner shelves are just some of the special touches of the house's history. Through this room to the master bedroom, located just on the other side of the Brick House's Mulberry Hall, named for its warm, gleamy color.

Rogers modestly refuses from giving himself credit as a decorator. "Jonathan came in and brought a touch of class—he brought all the class," he said. But their tag-team approach in this historic house appears to be a fruitful collaboration.

YOU HAVE TO
LIVE WITH THE
IDIOSYNCRASIES
OF THE HOUSE.

KORY ROGERS



dog portrait by Merrill Donamore, a drawing by Giffen Adams, and several of James Noro's large and colorful animal paintings.

Commenting on his attraction to so-called "outsider art," Brooks noted, "It's representative, yet it's a little off-kilter."

Humor and fantasy are in ample supply here. In *Knicker*, there is a satirical rendition of "Asterix" geneses in Grey and Black No. 1 ("ain known as "Whizzer's Mother No. 1" by James Whizzer. In this version, she smokes Winstons. Next to this drawing hangs a remarkable hand-drawn fox costume by South Burlington artist Wendy Copp, titled "all of the wild, granddads!" Ernie's exhibited Copp's fantastical, life-size costumes at the Sheldon in 2013, in the show "Whimsy & Fantasy at the Edge of the Forest."

Ironically, in an avid reader, and stacks of art books can be found throughout his house. He recently started the newly released book *The Apparently Marginal Activism of Marcel Duchamp* by Kiera Polgreen and confesses to a fascination with the Duchamp. In a hallway is a photographic re-creation of *Five-Way Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* — but in it Biesko has replaced that artist with pictures of himself. He hopes to someday mount an exhibition of what Duchamp dubbed "ready-mades" — objects already in existence, labeled as art.

Though his interest in Duchamp may surprise some, *Breaker's* home is devoted to his perhaps-chancey critique of the artist's conceptual rebelliousness. His ebullient collection defies neat categorization and continues in the folk-art tradition of blurring boundaries between art and artifact.

An Eye for History 403

of how Picasso merged an array of influences, including colonial photographers' images of African women, to create his groundbreaking painting.

A 1965 original Picasso drawing in her house stands in for this particular academic interest of Cohen's. So does a remarkable colonial-era carving of a human male figure; it's of African origin but rendered with Anglo facial features and hair reminiscent of Bob's Big Boy. Several African masks are on display, too, reflecting Picasso's infamous use of ethnographic objects as source material. One with honey-like ears hangs opposite a speckled honey-dial by Burlington artist Catherine Hall.

A SUBDUED PALETTE
HELPS EACH PIECE
STAND OUT.

Plenty of other Vermont artists are represented here, as well. These include a multitude of small-scale works by Winslow artist Leslie Fry, abstract paintings by former Burlington resident Gerrit Goffner and photographs by the late Vermont artist Wes Deaney — who bequeathed his works to Colton upon his death in 2000.

The majority of these are small to medium works, meaning there's plenty of empty wall space left over, particularly in the living room. It is uncrowded, and a subdued palette helps each piece stand out.

Though the breadth and diversity of Cohen's personal collection might sound intimidating, her home is warm and welcoming. Cohen gracefully balances local and global, historic and contemporary. Asked to describe her decorating style, she said, without missing a beat, "definitely eclectic." 

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Old Growth

At a Bristol mill, aged trees get a second life as unique furniture

BY MEGAN JAMES

The hulking base of what was once the largest elm tree in the Northeast lies on its side outside Vermont Tree Goods' mill in Bristol. From this angle, the cross-section of the century-old trunk—which used to stand more than 100 feet tall at the Charlotte home of David Garrett—is shaped like a starburst, its gnarly edges encircling a dark, hollow core.

The tree succumbed to Dutch elm disease earlier this year. Since cutting it down on November 7, John Monks and his woodworking team have been milling the slippery elm into enormous, one-of-a-kind boards, with which they'll build live-edge furniture. Monks says they have salvaged 90 percent of the material from this tree, which equals a boat 10,000 board feet, or enough to make 100 dining tables.

Most big old trees don't meet such a glamorous end. Tree services often dispose of specimens of this size because they simply have no use for them. Garrett, a hobbyist furniture maker, wanted his elm to live on. So he called in Vermont Tree Goods.

Monks not only has the equipment to mill such a gargantuan tree, he makes distinctive tables and benches, as well as smaller items such as cutting boards, almost exclusively from aged trees that would otherwise go to waste. Also, he really loves trees. Monks helped facilitate a tree-bagging ceremony—which drew about 30 people on a blustery Tuesday morning—for the Charlotte elm before cutting it down.

At the Vermont Tree Goods store front in downtown Bristol, Monks shows off his gorgeous creations. "No two pieces are the same. We're not just looking at the color and the grain," he says, "but also the shape."

He has a dining table whose top was created from one huge, sweeping board of red maple. He showcases benches accented with dark striated and/or spalting. "It's sort of like blue cheese," Monks explains with a smile. "It's what happens when a tree first starts to decay. The trick is to dry it before it gets too funky."

He built a coffee table from top-hale maple, a tree that was topped for spray. For many years, Monks explains, commercial mills wouldn't accept the bottom-eight feet of sugar maples that had grown in sugar bushes because they didn't want a log full of burls. "In recent years, it's become more desirable because of the story attached to the wood," he notes.

John Monks
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John Monks, along with his brother-in-law Jim Carter and partner David Monks, working on the restoration of the historic Grand Army of the Republic building in Jericho.

Old Growth 475

Monks has built his business around the concept that a product sells better when it comes with a story. "People crave that," he says.

To that end, a portion of the proceeds from furniture made from the Charlotte elms will benefit the Nature Conservancy's elm-restoration project. The organization had been hoping to save elms from that tree to broad saplings resistant to Dutch elm disease, which killed the majority of 77 million American elms over decades in the 20th century. But it was too late.

Monks, a New Yorker who relocated to Stone as a child but who he was 20, worked for many years as a contractor.

Then, in 2004, a fire changed the course of his career. Eight months into renovating the historic Grand Army of the Republic building in Jericho, the 100-year-old hall burned to the ground. Monks' father-in-law, Jim Carter, who owned the building, had been planning to rent the space out for weddings and community events.

Monks, who was at the time moving with his wife and son to a new house in Lincoln, had been storing his family's furniture in the GAR building. He lost all of it, as well as his tools, in the blaze.

"The bright side was, it got me out of the contracting business," Monks reflects. "It was cruel of being a contractor. I was really on a position to start fresh."

He began by making new furniture to replace what he'd lost in the fire. Interested in creating a simple, sleek, low-edge table, he asked a local tree service if he had any logs from older trees, something that would be at least three feet in diameter. It did and was happy to sell them. "They really have no use for them," says Monks. "Some of them, they just burn the pile up to make it go away, which to me is very wrong."

JOHN MONKS HAS BUILT HIS BUSINESS AROUND THE CONCEPT THAT A PRODUCT SELLS BETTER WHEN IT COMES WITH A STORY.

Monks says he decided "then and there" to make furniture full time from logs that would otherwise be discarded. There was just one hitch: How do you cut such massive logs?

"I started playing around with chain saws," Monks says. He bought the biggest one he could find, it had an eight-foot bar with a helper handle on the far end, which Monks' brother-in-law held. They cut logs this way until he concluded there had to be a less dangerous technique. He decided to design an electric chain saw.

Most and that work with such massive trees cut them in one of two ways: with a large band saw or with an Alaskan mill, an electric saw that slices logs horizontally. Monks' unique electric chain saw cuts vertically, so gravity helps it along. After trying out a couple of different designs, he now cuts a 25-foot saw in his friend's mill, which slices cleanly through logs so big they look like dinosaur ribs.

The Charlotte elm boards are now stacked up around the mill, where they'll dry for several months before Monks and his employees turn them into dining tables, benches and other furnishings.

Before this project, he'd never milled slippery elm, which is less common than American or white elm. "The wood is beautiful," Monks says, explaining that it looks similar to cherry, with a white sapwood edge and a red hardwood center. "There's so much to see in it. It's extraordinary stuff."

Discovering beautiful wood is one of the thrilling aspects of his job. "Most of the tree was really solid, not much rot," he says of the giant elm. "But until you cut it, you never know what you're going to find inside." 🍷

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Stepping Up

Sterling Staircase & Handrail has carved a special niche

BY SABIE WILLIAMS

Sandy Thompson has filled many roles. The Stowe native studied collective bargaining and conflict management at the University of Vermont. He made a brief appearance in *Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith* (2005) as Neimodian official Rame Hango when the actor who was originally cast broke his leg. And he was a TV producer, traveling the world for three seasons of NASCAR and three World Games. Now Thompson is a woodworker.

The blind builder, age 62, took over Sterling Staircase & Handrail from owner Fritz Monies in 2007. Shortly after, Thompson's longtime friend, father Zach Taylor, 43, joined him. Considering his skill set, he's the perfect complement, Thompson says. Last year, Chris "Strangeness" Strong, 51, joined their force, as well. Together, the trio has created beautiful stairs for numerous houses in the Waterbury-Stowe area and beyond. And, by all reports, they love his doing it.

Starting us known for impeccable, traditional wood-working in crafting high-end staircases and railings—particularly with a method called "tangent hand raking," Thompson explains that this involves carving a carving, bending rail while keeping the top level and the side, planed. While not all of their work requires a curve, it's one of their specialties. And it doesn't come cheap. Thompson estimates that most of the contractors rub they construct cost between \$300 and \$500 a linear foot.

In fact, the job that brought Thompson and Taylor together in 2008 was a massive oval-shaped staircase for a Long Island house "because of its elliptical design," Thompson says, "each tread was unique, and the pitch was constantly changing throughout." After seeing the job, Thompson realized he couldn't do it alone. He called on Taylor, "and the rest is history," he says.

That history is written by many

Vermont residents—or their contractors—who have turned to Sterling for assistance. "We tend to be heard for one thing, and, very soon after, the scope grows as they see what we can do," Taylor says. "For a number of reasons, there are often holes in the job that need to be filled, and they need to be difficult, rather interesting things."

One example is a five-edge wood bench for a machine, Thompson's current project. Another challenge was creating small lanterns to top the newel posts of a heart pine staircase.

Sometimes the "hole" Sterling needs to fill is as entire staircase, as in the instance of "the Leon job"—the woodworkers refer to their projects by the client's last name.

In about 1980, Thompson recalls, a couple bought "a dilapidated Victorian house" with an "incredibly

complex" staircase in Mount Holly. "It had been abandoned, and people had come in and torn off the balusters out," he says. The couple sent then-owner Monies photos and requested an estimate. He gave them a quote, but it was beyond their budget.

"They didn't have a ton of cash, but they wanted to do it right," Thompson continues. So they saved and saved and saved. And, 20 years later, they called Sterling and said they were ready.

"To be clear," Taylor adds, "they had been working on this house as a labor of love since they bought it. They would come up from Connecticut for the

weekend with their friends and have work parties. It was a special place. But the one missing piece of the entire house was the balustrade, which had been unconsciously ripped out. It was the crown jewel, the last thing that needed restoring."

The couple helped Thompson and Taylor set the new balusters—given the scope of the project, it warranted four sets of hands. As they were finishing the job, Thompson says he looked over at Mrs. Leon. "She's sitting on her staircase with this big grin on her face and tears running down. That was, to me, the most satisfying thing."

They report getting similar emotional reactions on certain difficult projects. Currently, they're working on a house in central Vermont whose design is meant to "symbolize the inner workings of a clock. It has a lot of curving walls and many levels," Thompson says.

They just installed an elliptical stair with smoothly curved steps for the clock house. After the owner, also a woodworker, saw it, Thompson went for a handshake, "and he grabbed me by the hand and pulled me in and gave me this huge kiss on my cheek."

Given the nature of Sterling's work—green, elegant and specialized—these reactions aren't surprising. "I think people love working with us because of that sort of unique and challenging project," Thompson says. "We work really hard, and they appreciate that."

INFO

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Loan, Sweet Loan

Veterans Administration mortgages help bring vets "home"

BY NANCY STEARNS BERGAK

Al Turgeon, a senior administrator at the University of Vermont, spent 24 years in the United States Army on active duty. He served in Alaska, Illinois, Kansas, Colorado, South Korea, Germany and the Middle East as an infantry officer with a specialty in operations, planning and training. His career also included two non-tactical assignments in Vermont as a Reserve Officers' Training Corps instructor.

Wherever possible, Turgeon opted to settle his family into a private home rather than military housing. And in each scenario—for a total of five homes—the Veterans Administration made the mortgage possible.

Through its programs, the VA serves as a guarantee for a home loan that enables lenders, such as banks or credit unions, to offer financing with no down payment or mortgage insurance and very low interest rates. Veterans, and those still enlisted, must provide a certificate of eligibility as proof of military service to qualify.

Turgeon first learned about VA loans in 1986 while teaching at Norwich University. He was 27 and married with two sons, ages 4 and 2 (a third son came later). They had little cash to spare. Still, Turgeon wanted to put down roots even though his military career would inevitably pull them up again. The young family found an affordable place in Northfield and took up residence for five years—courtesy of a VA loan and sweet equity.

"It was an old farmhouse with a lot of deferred maintenance," Turgeon recalls. "The low-cost loan helped me save resources for fixing things that needed to be done while allowing me to invest in a home."

Since then, Turgeon has used VA loans to purchase a new dwelling in Fort Leavenworth, Kan., a



Al Turgeon (left) and Jon Haller

contemporary home in Colorado Springs and a clipboard home in an established Essex neighborhood. "In every respect," Turgeon says, "I've been able to use a substantial amount of money because of the low transactional costs associated with a VA loan."

For those interested in following suit, he has a few suggestions. "Get yourself a lender that has processed VA loans. You want to depend on someone who is very knowledgeable," he advises. "And make use of the VA website or a benefits counselor for details on the process as well as the certificate of eligibility."

Jon Templeton, a real estate agent with Larkin Realty who served in the U.S. Navy from 1964 to 1990, encourages anyone who qualifies to make use of what he believes is an exceptional value. "The VA loan program is an awesome benefit for our military families," he says. "I don't see any reason why a veteran wouldn't want to take advantage of it."

Templeton gives an example of one Vermont community in which veterans have done just that. In the last few years, approximately 30 percent of new homeowners in St. Albans Harborview and Putneyville Estates—which are Larkin Realty and Putneyville Development projects—have used VA loans to purchase their properties, he says.

But considering the large number of veterans in the state, VA loans could be utilized more, says Barb McHenry, senior loan officer with Fairway Independent Mortgage in South Burlington. "Vermont has the highest per capita deployment of National Guardians," she notes.

Fairway hosts a number of annual events to honor Vermont's retired and active military personnel, including a prize giveaway on Veterans Day in coordination with Leonard's Pizzeria in South Burlington and Mince's Pizzeria & Restaurant in St. Albans. These

events drawling attention to the benefits and services available for vets interested in buying a home. There's a "giving back" component to the efforts, as well.

"Fairway Mortgage has a nonprofit called the American Warrior Initiative to which we donate throughout the year," McHenry says. At an October event, the company bought 30 real estate agents lunch to honor serve veterans. "We raised and donated \$10,000 for a deserving local veteran," says McHenry.

John Ahoy, an agent with RE/MAX North Professionals, is spearheading a list of Chittenden County real estate partners who are part of a national rebate program called Heroes Home Advantage. It offers cash, credits and discounts to anyone who protects and serves—from members of the military and law enforcement to firefighters, health care workers, first responders and teachers. A website

connects applicants with real estate agents, lenders, title companies and attorneys in their communities. VA loans are based on areas of expertise for nearly every state, including Vermont.

After Turgeon divorced and retired from the Army, he began a second chapter in his life with a new spouse and a new home. Yet he continued making use of the "huge financial benefit" of the VA loan

process. Twenty-one years after purchasing his first home in Northfield, he bought a historic Wilketon farmhouse where he now resides with his partner, Joe Haller. The couple married on the property's grounds in 2012 and intend to live there happily ever after—thanks in part to the VA's recent loan program. ♥

**I DON'T SEE ANY REASON
WHY A VETERAN
WOULDN'T WANT TO
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Company kitchen at American Meadows

Mission Driven

Arocordis Design configures office space with company culture in mind

BY CAROLYN SHAPIRO

Three days before Thanksgiving, the staff of American Meadows gathered in the company kitchen for a potluck lunch of dishes that stretched the length of the counter. Desserts sat on a side table.

Then, instead of returning to their desks to eat, the 30 or so employees pulled up stools to a tall, 10-foot-long farmhouse table — refilled from honey-burn wallboards by a guy in Stowe — to chat while enjoying their turkey, stuffing and kale salads. Overhead, a large skylight illuminated the room. Along the far wall, a built-in white bench held floral and striped pillows in front of a troupe of wildflower seed and plant fence and a field of purple lupine.

Ethan Platt, co-owner and president of the online wildflower seed and plant business, envisioned such a gathering when he designed the lochren area as part of Arocordis Design's new home office in Shelburne. The company moved from Williston into the carefully crafted quarters last July.

The journey began when Platt brought in architect Stephen Frey, who specializes in "values-driven" projects for commercial and industrial clients. President and principal architect of Arocordis Design in Montpelier, Frey primarily develops recreation plans — few companies in Vermont build new these days — that reflect and enhance a company's mission.

That might mean designing a small, out-of-the-way deviator space and a more prominent stairway for a client who aims to encourage healthy behaviors and movement among the staff. A family-oriented business might focus on lactation lounges and flexible workspaces that allow employees to adjust their schedules, share shifts or telecommute more easily.

Frey's overall goal is simple: "to help clients or organizations become better places to work."

For American Meadows, Platt wanted the milieu to complement the company's — and its customers' — devotion to the beautiful outdoors. The goal was to give workers a home away from home, a destination they'd look forward to every day. The 50-year-round employees, plus another 30 or so in season, sell more than 200 species and 50 varieties of wildflower seeds directly to consumers.

"We just want them to have the same passion that our customers have in the activity that they're involved in," Platt said. "We want them to bring that



PHOTO BY CAROLYN SHAPIRO

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passion to their job, and we want to create a culture that encourages that."

The whole setup encourages collaboration, interaction and augmentation with a variety of gathering spaces, from cozy couches to conference rooms with computer screens. A large classroom can convert to two smaller spaces for training or yoga classes. Unique touches reflect American Meadows' connection with its workers and history. A concrete donkey stands outside of a conference room holding baskets filled with wild flowers that one employee crafts as a side business; the conference room called the Pink Tank serves as an inside joke, referencing the large vending tent that the company erected in its former Wilton warehouse in a makeshift conference room.

What drives Frey is the cultural aspect of designing a workplace. To him, the structure that houses a company is merely an adjunct of its personality, or "brand DNA," as he called it.

He's as much a psychologist or management consultant as an architect. For each job, Frey dives into the client's sense of corporate identity, their values and purpose, and the image and attitude they want to convey to their employees and customers. He asks them questions such as, "Are you seeking your talk?"

Eight years ago, Platt bought American Meadows with partner Michael Luciani. While headquartered in Wilton for almost 15 years, the company outgrew and renovated the space several times.

Platt had strong ideas about what he wanted — and a handsyone's ability to accomplish many of them. In July 2015, he hired Frey to home and concrete his vision, stick to the budget, and guide him in unforeseen directions.

Frey and Platt scouted potential new sites. They knew the Shelburne location was ideal, even with its drugged ceilings, great institutional carpeting and blank walls. It had previously housed the Ann Bunch Coastal Furniture store and Chibi High, a recreational gear store, before that. The two-story climbing wall remains, and Platt plans to keep it for employee use, in addition to a small fitness center off the warehouse in the back of the building.

At every step, the owners incorporated the feedback of American Meadows' employees, bring in their comments to the new site, which has far stronger and equipment, and their comments on a Google doc, American Meadows' two leadership teams — one called the "fun team"

— took field trips to about a dozen of the top workplaces in Chittenden County.

The inclusive approach stemmed not only from philanthropy but practicality. With just 5 percent unemployment in Chittenden County, where companies compete for workers with the likes of Burlington and Rutland, the owners hope the appeal of American Meadows' working environment can give it an edge in recruitment and retention.

Lisa Morrisette, the executive manager for American Meadows, has worked for the company for 11 years and through five relocations in Wilton. She said that location never accomplished the vibe the office has now. "I used to sit in the warehouse," she noted while enjoying a plate of the pea-throating bird. "You get here, and it's bright and it's cheery and it makes you want to come to work."

Frey, 31, a University of Vermont graduate who majored in studio art, earned his master's degree in architecture from the University of Colorado in Denver. He worked in big firms there for 12 years, then returned to Vermont to join Macley Architects in Whitefield. That got him "charged up by the focus

on sustainability and bringing green thinking back in the mainstream," he said. Frey's prominent projects included the Renewable NRG Systems headquarters in Hinesburg and Seventh Generation's downtown Burlington home.

Laid off during the recession and contract on downturn, Frey decided to start his own company with those values front and center. *American*

combines two Latin words are, meaning to till or cultivate; and cords, which means heart. That's how Frey sees his role: cultivating and promoting the heart and soul of each client.

His clients range from organizations with fewer than 20 workers to giant companies such as insurance carrier National Life Group, which has a four-story, football-field-size office space in Montpelier.

American Meadows presented the chance to apply one of Frey's favorite themes, to "bring nature near," a concept championed by Louis Kahn in the early 20th century. Even the National Life job emphasized interior plants, water, natural in materials and daylight.

So, for a gardening company, it was a no-brainer. "It's about connecting with the Earth," Frey said. "It's about

connecting with plants and growing things."

As an alternative to gray cubicles, Platt built headboard half-walls around the front-office desks. The wood frames came from the discarded Douglas fir bleachers of South Burlington High School. Think wooden beams were "orphan timbers" left over at Vermont Fumes.

Each conference room at American Meadows looks like a garden shed, with red cedar shingles and reclaimed four-by-four pined windows. Even the oval, multicolored carpeting in the front office was made from yarn run-offs by a flooring manufacturer that uses environmentally sound materials and recycles the product when it needs replacing.

Downstairs in American Meadows, a small meeting area evokes a backyard, with four Adirondack chairs around a fake fire pit atop a grass-green shag rug. Photo-like wallpaper contributes to the outdoor feel, wrapping the sitting in rail boxes and lush ladder introduced by living trails.

This kind of design, Frey said, can make a workplace as sacred to any spiritual site. Human interaction with a space elevates it to a higher status, he noted. "It doesn't mean anything unless people are using it in the best possible way." 

INFO

Learn more at americanmeadows.com



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Let There Be **Light**

Vermont candle makers keep the home fires burning

BY SARDIE WILLIAMS

Winter is coming, and you know what that means: It's candle season. Not just if your power goes out in a storm, but because lighting candles against the darkness instantly makes a room warmer, cozier and more inviting. **Bonus:** Many candles smell good and can even make you feel good.

But have you snuff for the matches, take a look at your waxy wick. Unless it's expressly labeled soy or beeswax, it's likely made of paraffin, the most readily available candle wax. And while a paraffin pillar may be cheap, the substance is a derivative of petroleum, some believe that, when lit, it can release carcinogens into the air. In fact, at the candle's smolder outside of the United States, there might even be a bit of lead in the wick. (The U.S. banned the manufacture and sale of leaded wicks in 2005.)

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Each of Phoenix Honeylight's standard is created by hand. Instead of using one of the models (as well as others from his latest designs) such as an ornamental sleigh, PVC piping, dried corn cobs, and decorative vases. She's even made a polyurethane mold of his own.

These droplets are then filled with lacemastic, some of it colored with red and green, like authentic natural dyes. Most of the finished, though, come in the traditional rich, saturated gold and, of course, black: the soft, honey-like fluorescence of beeswax.

—les or Luperi oak, from a mass of a bunch. Or the cluster of grapes designed to stop a wine bottle. The 82 goes on — Richard's shadow 823 candle sticks over her throne with Verano's shadow 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1010, 1011, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1015, 1016, 1017, 1018, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1022, 1023, 1024, 1025, 1026, 1027, 1028, 1029, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1035, 1036, 1037, 1038, 1039, 1040, 1041, 1042, 1043, 1044, 1045, 1046, 1047, 1048, 1049, 1050, 1051, 1052, 1053, 1054, 1055, 1056, 1057, 1058, 1059, 1060, 1061, 1062, 1063, 1064, 1065, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1070, 1071, 1072, 1073, 1074, 1075, 1076, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1080, 1081, 1082, 1083, 1084, 1085, 1086, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1091, 1092, 1093, 1094, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1098, 1099, 1100, 1101, 1102, 1103, 1104, 1105, 1106, 1107, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1111, 1112, 1113, 1114, 1115, 1116, 1117, 1118, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125, 1126, 1127, 1128, 1129, 1130, 1131, 1132, 1133, 1134, 1135, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1140, 1141, 1142, 1143, 1144, 1145, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1154, 1155, 1156, 1157, 1158, 1159, 1160, 1161, 1162, 1163, 1164, 1165, 1166, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1170, 1171, 1172, 1173, 1174, 1175, 1176, 1177, 1178, 1179, 1180, 1181, 1182, 1183, 1184, 1185, 1186, 1187, 1188, 1189, 1190, 1191, 1192, 1193, 1194, 1195, 1196, 1197, 1198, 1199, 1200, 1201, 1202, 1203, 1204, 1205, 1206, 1207, 1208, 1209, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1213, 1214, 1215, 1216, 1217, 1218, 1219, 1220, 1221, 1222, 1223, 1224, 1225, 1226, 1227, 1228, 1229, 1230, 1231, 1232, 1233, 1234, 1235, 1236, 1237, 1238, 1239, 1240, 1241, 1242, 1243, 1244, 1245, 1246, 1247, 1248, 1249, 1250, 1251, 1252, 1253, 1254, 1255, 1256, 1257, 1258, 1259, 1260, 1261, 1262, 1263, 1264, 1265, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1269, 1270, 1271, 1272, 1273, 1274, 1275, 1276, 1277, 1278, 1279, 1280, 1281, 1282, 1283, 1284, 1285, 1286, 1287, 1288, 1289, 1290, 1291, 1292, 1293, 1294, 1295, 1296, 1297, 1298, 1299, 1300, 1301, 1302, 1303, 1304, 1305, 1306, 1307, 1308, 1309, 1310, 1311, 1312, 1313, 1314, 1315, 1316, 1317, 1318, 1319, 1320, 1321, 1322, 1323, 1324, 1325, 1326, 1327, 1328, 1329, 1330, 1331, 1332, 1333, 1334, 1335, 1336, 1337, 1338, 1339, 1340, 1341, 1342, 1343, 1344, 1345, 1346, 1347, 1348, 1349, 1350, 1351, 1352, 1353, 1354, 1355, 1356, 1357, 1358, 1359, 1360, 1361, 1362, 1363, 1364, 1365, 1366, 1367, 1368, 1369, 1370, 1371, 1372, 1373, 1374, 1375, 1376, 1377, 1378, 1379, 1380, 1381, 1382, 1383, 1384, 1385, 1386, 1387, 1388, 1389, 1390, 1391, 1392, 1393, 1394, 1395, 1396, 1397, 1398, 1399, 1400, 1401, 1402, 1403, 1404, 1405, 1406, 1407, 1408, 1409, 1410, 1411, 1412, 1413, 1414, 1415, 1416, 1417, 1418, 1419, 1420, 1421, 1422, 1423, 1424, 1425, 1426, 1427, 1428, 1429, 1430, 1431, 1432, 1433, 1434, 1435, 1436, 1437, 1438, 1439, 1440, 1441, 1442, 1443, 1444, 1445, 1446, 1447, 1448, 1449, 1450, 1451, 1452, 1453, 1454, 1455, 1456, 1457, 1458, 1459, 1460, 1461, 1462, 1463, 1464, 1465, 1466, 1467, 1468, 1469, 1470, 1471, 1472, 1473, 1474, 1475, 1476, 1477, 1478, 1479, 1480, 1481, 1482, 1483, 1484, 1485, 1486, 1487, 1488, 1489, 1490, 1491, 1492, 1493, 1494, 1495, 1496, 1497, 1498, 1499, 1500, 1501, 1502, 1503, 1504, 1505, 1506, 1507, 1508, 1509, 1510, 1511, 1512, 1513, 1514, 1515, 1516, 1517, 1518, 1519, 1520, 1521, 1522, 1523, 1524, 1525, 1526,

Way Out Way

75 Durr Hill Lane, North Hyde Park, NSW
1703-1908, authors of *Grass in the Mouth*

Jim Borsch began making natural dyes in his hometown of Burlington in 1992. After realizing that the artificial dyes in his products weren't in sync with the environmentally conscious outlook of his customers, he switched over-

Take, for example, the artificial colors. Today, Way Out Wax produces candles in a variety of colors used wax compositions from its Hyde Park factory. While the company's proprietary yellow candle label menthol

infused, food-grade paraffin. It also costs pretty much less and is non-toxic and hypo-allergenic. For those concerned about genetics in the house, Why Not Wax also makes actively recycled candles.

Either way, the confusing labyrinthine of scents, with the

help of certified aromatherapist Wendy Gomez, WDW developed such options as Ecstasy Lows, a blend of lavender, ylang-ylang and patchouli, and Weather in Paradise, a combination of cedar, spruce and vanilla that will take you to straight to the beachfront.

MONA's garish misadventures, Anna
Kavett, mycher theatre artists are
they name—for its "comforting blend of
"fairy tales" and "Dark Horse. As that
of the name suggests, the (and the
the indignating effects of puppetry,
"suspense" and "emancipation." "Sometimes,"
Kavett adds, "you just need to look
up at when there's a curtain." (The
"Dark Horse" is a "C")

448 Pine Street, Burlington, 802-5794.
Surroundings and

When it comes to aromatherapy, Los Angeles is by no means the local market cornered in its Pine Street storefront aesthetic shop, founder Layla Kringer and cohorts whip up sustainably sourced essential oil blends. These are used in everything from sage to luxury perfumes. —you guessed it— candles.

All of Lumeneo's candles are made from soy wax. While the scents are blended at the office, the candles are manufactured at The Way Out West facility in Hyde Park. Lumeneo switches up scents with each new batch, and the company has just finished pouring the candles that will light homes this winter.

During recent visit, staff member Richard Kneiser offers up some of her favorite turtle stories. He handles crocodiles, since each is designed to meet a different need. But, Kneiser suggests, the Clardy lineal "is great for sitting at my desk, or taking yoga in the morning." She adds that crocodiles cannot just be other than you grow down. "I love using crocodiles in the day, especially during the winter" she says.

The cookies — and other Lutsenme products — can be purchased online, but customers in the Burlington area should visit the shop. How else will you know which scent best suits your mood? (Now, if anything, the lettuce, might not be particularly appealing in print, but um, what if the scent fills all warm places — including yours — of plant-plant — I'd change your mind.

Before you begin, Kierke has a dig-
— want the pursuit of method used to
— the best way to the path of life and
— you (since it is the only). Then say
— your life, but only if you get the
— you find there are two essential



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